

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 250922Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4385
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PINT, BG
SUBJECT: PRESS REACTION TO ZIA'S MOVES

REF: DACCA 2117

1. PRESS REACTION HAS BEEN, AS EXPECTED, UNIVERSALLY
ENTHUSIASTIC CONCERNING GENERAL ZIA'S ASSUMPTION OF THE
PRESIDENCY, HIS CALL FOR A NATIONAL REFERENDUM AND HIS
DECISION TO HOLD GENERAL ELECTIONS IN DECEMBER, 1978.
THE BANGLADESH TIMES CALLED ZIA'S APRIL 22 ADDRESS TO
THE NATION "A SPARKLING REFLECTION OF HIS UNWAVERING
RESPECT FOR THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE." THE EDITORIAL

DELAARED THAT ZIA'S DECISION TO HOLD ELECTIONS AND TO
SEEK A NATIONAL REFERENDUM POINTS TO "HIS FIRM COMMITMENT
TO DEMOCRACY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRATIC IDEALS
IN THE COUNTRY." THE EDITORIAL PRAISES ZIA'S
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DETERMINATION TO APPROACH GENERAL ELECTIONS IN A CAREFUL
MANNER AND ONLY AFTER FIRMLY ESTABLISHING A BASIS FOR
ELECTIONS ON THE LOCAL LEVEL. IN CONCLUSION, THE
EDIT EXPRESSES PRAISE FOR THE WORK ZIA HAS DONE FOR THE
COUNTRY IN THE LAST EIGHTEEN MONTHS: "A SOLDIER AND
FREEDOM FIGHTER, HE HAS ACTED AS THE CATALYST FOR
CONCERTLY CLAIM THE SUPPORT AND COOPERATION

FROM ALL."

2. THE WEEKLY HOLIDAY, IN A FRONT-PAGE ANALYSIS ENTITLED, "A QUALITATIVE CHANGE TAKES PLACE," SUGGESTED THAT ONE EXPLANATION FOR HAVING A REFERENDUM IS THAT GENERAL ZIA, IN THE TWENTY MONTHS BEFORE GENERAL ELECTIONS, "WILL FEEL BETTER EQUIPPED TO GOVERN IF HE RECEIVES A KIND OF ENDORSEMENT FOR HIS GOVERNMENT FROM THE VOTERS." AS FOR THE QUALITATIVE CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT, HOLIDAY STATES THAT AFTER THE REFERENDUM, "THE GOVERNMENT MAY NO LONGER TREAT ITSELF AS AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT BUT RATHER AS ONE WITH A WIDE POWER BASE WHICH CAN TAKE DECISIVE ACTION ON MATTERS OF POLICY.

3. AS REPORTED REFTEL, ITTEFAQ, THE LARGEST CIRCULATION BENGALI DAILY, AND AZAD DID NOT IMMEDIATELY PRINT EDITORIALS ON THE GOVERNMENT CHANGES. OVER THE WEEKEND, BOTH PUBLISHED CONGRATULATORY EDITORIALS.

4. IN ADDITION TO THE EDITORIAL PRAISE, MOST NEWSPAPERS HAVE PRINTED GOODWILL MESSAGES FROM CIVIC AND BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE EDITIRIAL PRAISE IS TO BE EXPECTED, THERE IS A HOPEFUL NOTE THAT THE BDG WILL BE MORE EFFECTIVE WITH ZIA CLEARLY IN THE TOP POSITION AND, PRESUMABLY, WITH A MANDATE FROM THE PEOPLE. MASTERS

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